



Kansas Health Institute Findings from Wichita Transit HIA

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Kansas Health Institute

- **Vision:** *Healthier Kansans through effective policy.*
- **Mission:** *To improve the health of all Kansans by supporting effective policy making, engaging at the state and community levels, and providing non-partisan, actionable and evidence-based information.*
 - State-level public health, fiscal and health policy
 - Nonprofit, unaffiliated with academia, non-advocacy





Health Impact Assessment Overview

- HIA is type of study that helps decision-makers identify the likely health impacts of a decision in another field before the decision is made.
- HIA's purpose is to improve health through providing balanced information using community perspectives, data and literature.
- Helps those working outside the health field understand the health impacts of their work.
- Makes recommendations focused on minimizing negative and maximizing positive health impacts to encourage well-informed policies.



Acknowledgments

Support

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Partners

This HIA was conducted by Kansas Health Institute in collaboration with the University of Kansas School of Medicine-Wichita and The Hugo Wall School of Urban and Public Affairs at Wichita State University.

HIA Advisory Panel

The HIA Advisory Panel, made up of a various Wichita stakeholders provided valuable feedback throughout the process to ensure the report's findings and recommendations were feasible and meaningful.



Wichita HIA: Why

- Opportunity to inform a decision being made on an important local issue
- Stakeholder and policymaker interest in learning about potential trade-offs and benefits of proposed changes to transit
- Sufficient time to conduct a meaningful assessment
- Local partners are vested in the issue
- Existing local work around transit to build upon



Building on Existing Efforts to Improve Wichita Transit System

- Olsson Associates Report (2012)
 - Developed Four Transit Scenarios
- Community Outreach Study (2012)
 - Identify community transit needs
- HIA Transit Work (2012-2013)
 - Expanded the policy conversation around transit to include health issues in Wichita



Wichita Transit HIA

Opportunity:

Inform decision-making on changes to the public transit system in Wichita, Kansas

Process:

Assesses health effects of Olsson Concepts

Involves a 6 step process (screening, scoping, assessment, reporting and recommendations, monitoring and evaluation)

Key Policymakers:

Wichita City Council
Wichita Transit Advisory Board
Wichita Transit





How do the Proposed Concepts for Wichita Transit Impact Health?

“My understanding is that it (transit) is perhaps a healthy alternative to regular transportation.”

- *Community Stakeholder*



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Potential Health Effects of Proposed Public Transit Concepts in Wichita, Kansas

Kansas Health Impact Assessment Project



“We must convince the average person that if they looked at transit as part of their transportation package and it was more reliable and ran later, then their lives would be a lot healthier as well.”

- *Community Stakeholder*



Transit Concepts

POTENTIAL POSITIVE HEALTH IMPACTS

N/A

A ● ● ●

B ● ●

C ●

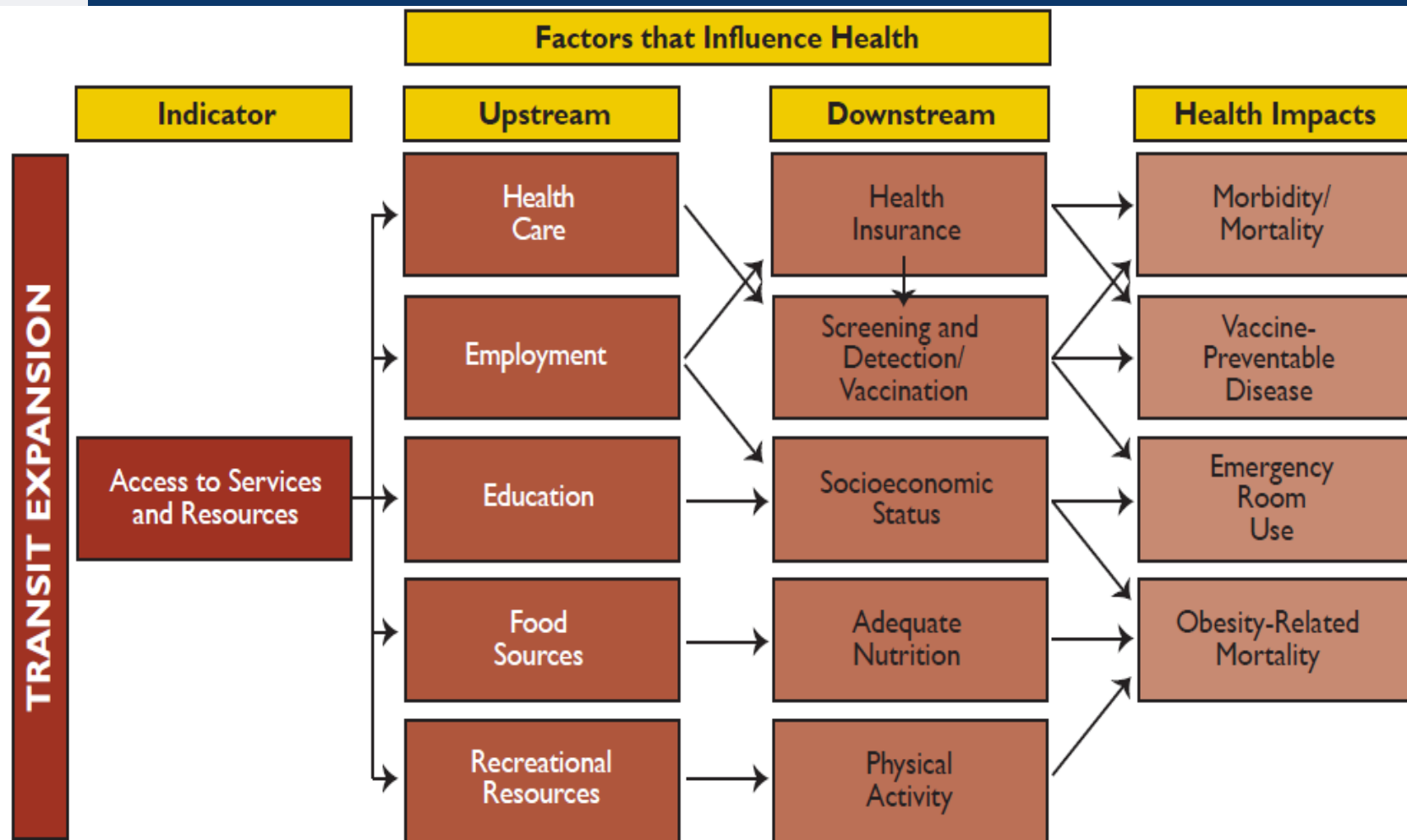
D1 ●

D2 ●

- Current: Hub-and-spoke, most geographic coverage, no night or Sunday service
- Concept A (Grid): Increased frequency, night and weekend, routes traveling N and S, slightly less geographic coverage than current system
- Concept B (Optimization): Optimize current system with great frequency, elimination of low ridership
- Concept C (Reduction): Reduce from current system, fewer routes, reduced hours, covers transit dependent
- Concept D (extension D1 and/or Commuter D2)



Health Impacts of Transit on Access to Services





Access to Health Care

■ Findings

- Availability of transportation options can improve or decrease access to health care.
- Access to reliable transit increases the likelihood of primary care and chronic care visits and decreases the number of emergency room visits.
- Concept A would likely to increase access to health care and result in positive health impacts.
- All three concepts (A,B,C) would limit access to at least six hospitals and several health care facilities.

■ Recommendations

Wichita Transit should consider:

- Locating bus stops near health care offices and specialty clinic, especially those that serve children.*
- Encouraging health care organizations to inform and link their patients to available transit services.

“Medical services are moving to the edge of the city, and that is the hardest to catch. Specialized care is particularly difficult to provide access to via transit.”

— Community
Stakeholder



Access to Employment

"I would like to see more transit for employment. That could be improved as well."

— Community Stakeholder

■ Findings

- Typically one of the most predominant uses of transit is to get to work, but Wichita may not follow this trend.
- Concepts A and B increase timeliness and frequency of services, which improve access to transit, especially for shift workers, while C does not.
- The hub-and-spoke system doesn't provide easy access to jobs outside of downtown Wichita. However, many of these jobs are located outside of the downtown area.
- The impact on the Wichita economy resulting from additional Wichita area resident payroll earnings would be \$6.1 million annually for Concept A, \$3.1 million annually for Concept B and \$1.2 million annually for Concept D1.

■ Recommendations

Wichita Transit should consider:

- Increasing frequency of bus routes and availability of routes at night or on weekends to align the transit schedule with shift workers' needs.*
- Exploring the viability of a grid system.

"We hear that one of the reasons we should do the expansion is that young professionals want to live in communities where they can ride transit."

— Community Stakeholder



Access to Food Sources

■ Findings

- In general, people who are more likely to use bus service for grocery shopping do not have access to alternative modes of transportation.
- The use of a bus for grocery shopping also depends on available places on the bus to store groceries.
- The use of transit for grocery shopping is dependent on convenience (e.g. proximity, timeliness).

■ Recommendations

The Metropolitan Area Planning Department should consider:

- Locating future grocery stores near transit routes. This can be achieved through zoning changes or other incentives.

Wichita Transit should consider:

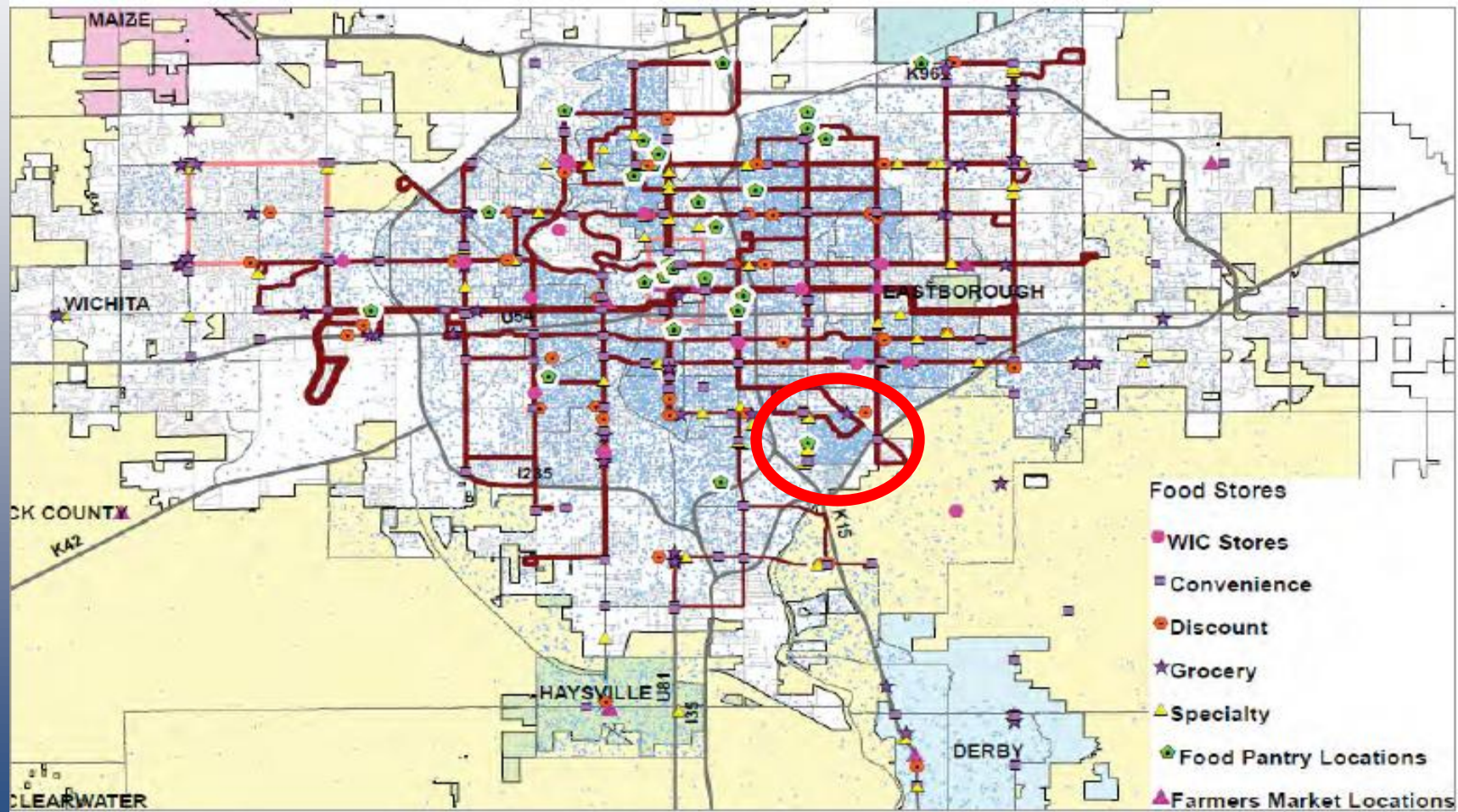
- Using buses with a low floor area for rolling carts on the routes that have the most grocery stores.
- Reviewing and changing the two-bag limit on buses to a higher number, such as six.*

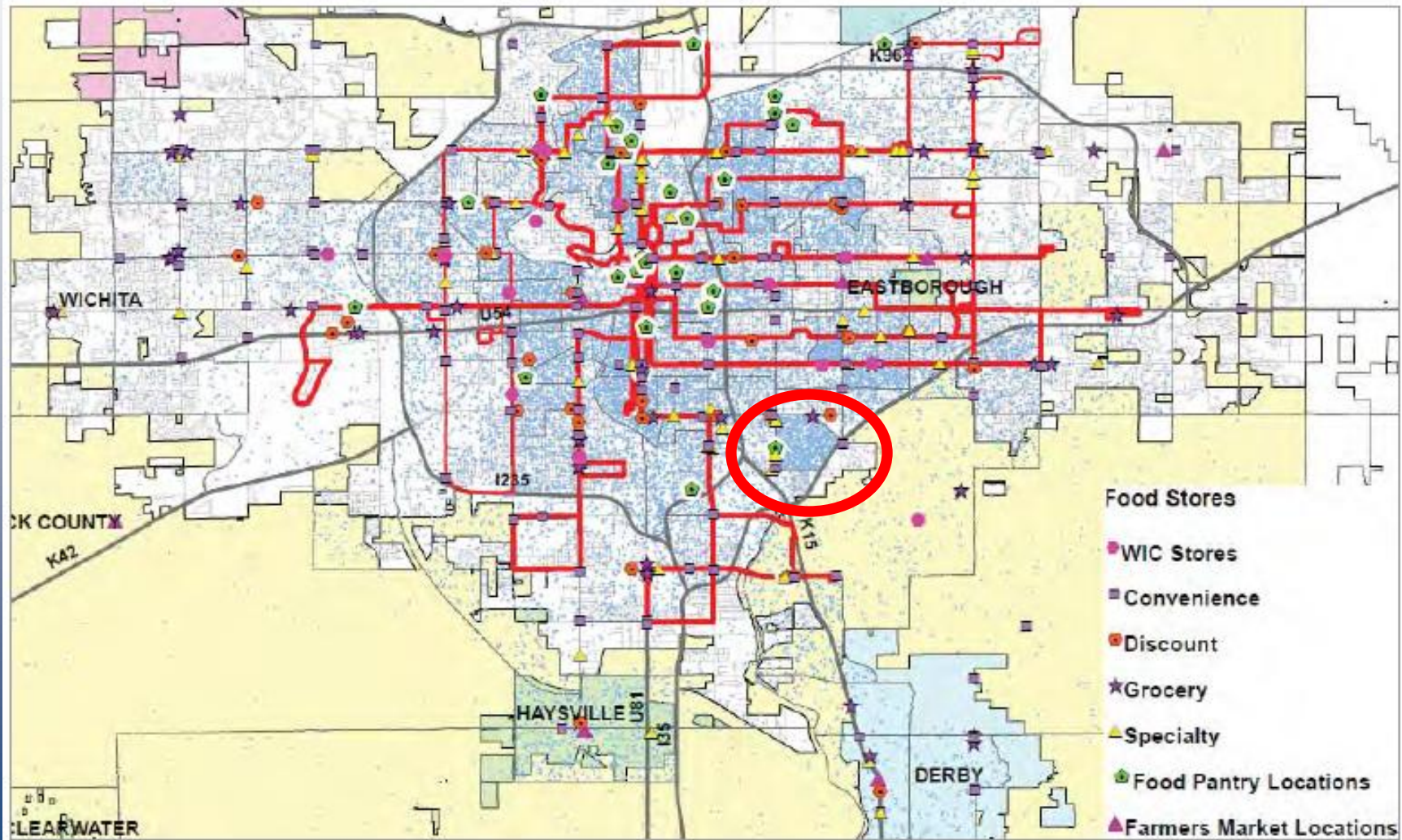
"I would like to see increased access to food services, but I'm not sure how to go about doing that."

— Community
Stakeholder



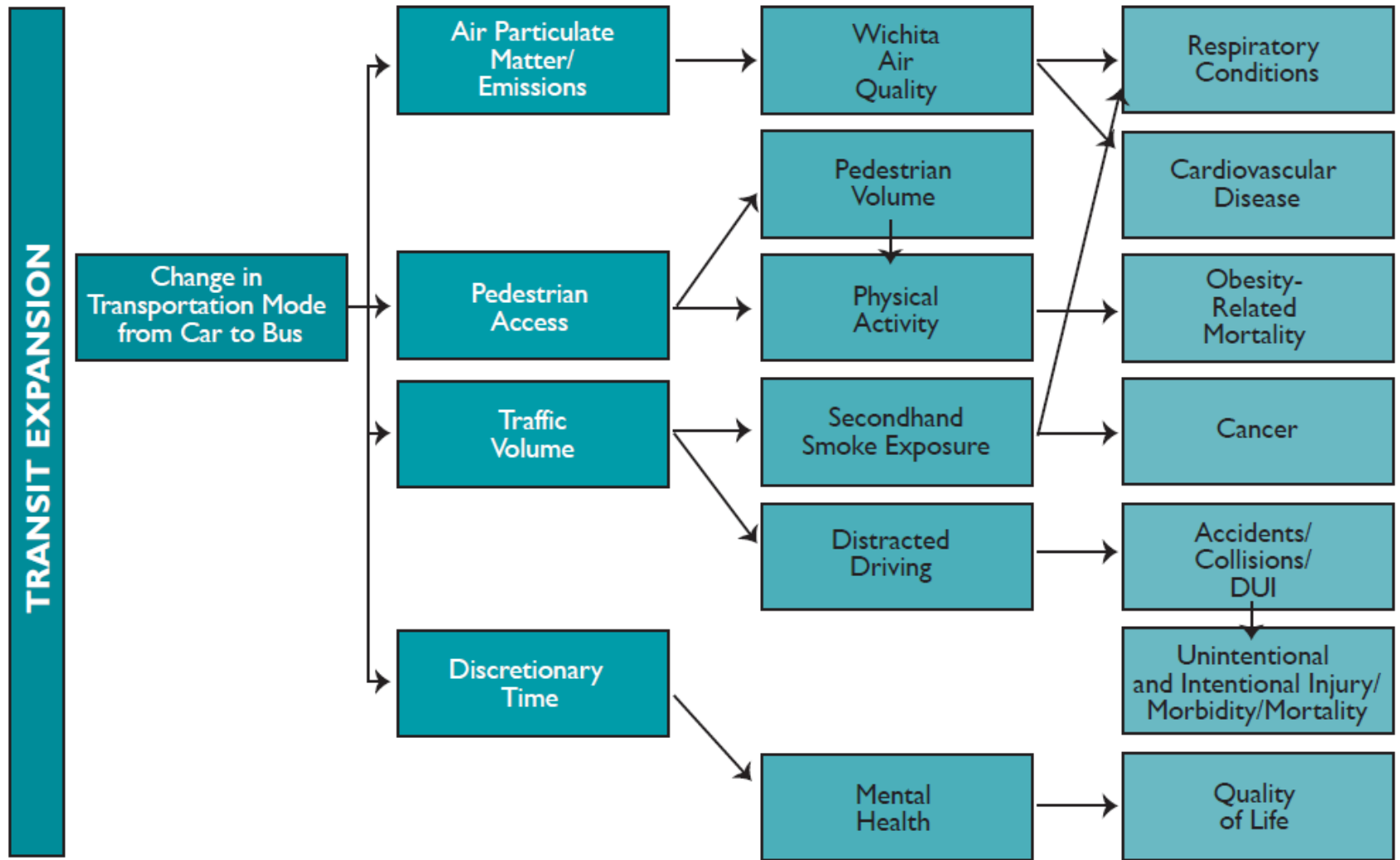
Mapping Access to Services Concept A and Food Sources







Health Impacts of Transit on Transportation Mode





Switching from Driving to Riding Air Quality

■ Findings

- In terms of overall air quality, high ozone levels are the primary concern for Wichita.
- Projected increases in transit ridership under Concepts A and B would improve overall air quality but may not decrease ozone levels.

■ Recommendations

Wichita Transit should consider:

- Implementing various strategies, including those suggested in the HIA report (e.g. improve timeliness and frequency of buses, develop a universal pass for students), to increase ridership and thereby improve overall air quality in Wichita.*



Switching from Driving to Riding

Pedestrian Access & Physical Activity

■ Findings

- People who receive an employer-sponsored transit pass are more likely to use transit to get to work and meet physical activity recommendations.
- Public transportation users potentially achieve up to 30 minutes of physical activity daily.
- Increases in ridership under Concept A can be expected to translate into additional community health care savings of \$76,141 per year due to walking. Concept B would yield savings of \$72,528 per year and C would result in a decrease of savings by \$24,231.

■ Recommendations

Wichita employers in collaboration with Wichita Transit should consider:

- Subsidizing the cost of bus passes to encourage ridership instead of car use and improve employees' health status.*

WAMPO in collaboration with Wichita Transit should consider:

- Placing bus stops in locations that are connected to sidewalks, crosswalks and pedestrian and bike paths, when possible.*
- Integrating and aligning transit plans with city zoning.



Switching from Driving to Riding

Distracted Driving

■ Findings

- In general, distracted driving causes one in six fatal vehicle collisions.
- The HIA team estimates that 80 percent of new transit riders will have switched from passenger vehicles to public transit.
- As a result of switching to public transit, Concept A would result in the fewer distracted drivers than the others.

■ Recommendations

Sedgwick County Health Department should consider:

- Increasing efforts (e.g. publications, announcements and/or media) to inform people about the health risks associated with distracted driving.
- Utilizing ad spaces on buses and shelters to highlight transit as a way to reduce distracted driving.



Final Thoughts

- A transit system's design can especially affect the health of vulnerable populations (e.g. disabled, minority, low SES, immigrants) through their ability to access services.
- A transit system that is dependable, runs frequently, includes expanded hours of operation and night and weekend service could increase the potential for riders to utilize transit to get to work.



Final Thoughts

- Switching from a car to a bus has built in positive benefits for the community (e.g. less congestion on the roads, fewer distracted drivers).
- As changes are made to the Wichita transit system the public should be informed of the availability, location and frequency of the routes.



Questions/Comments



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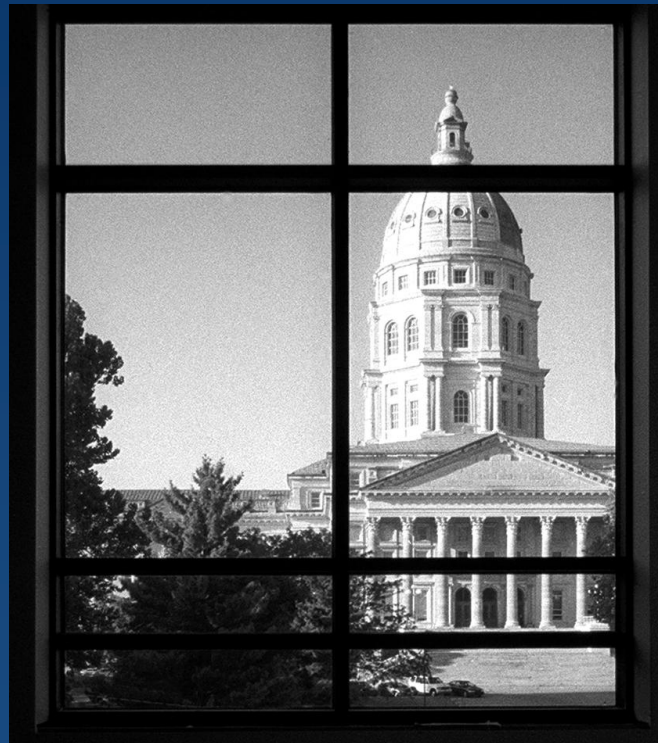
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